773 intervention of any kind, they gave birth after drinking water in which Faro had secretly mixed tomato juice. They offered thanks by giving him three or four tomatoes, depending upon the sex of the child.

After the women, the men, too, gave up worshiping the tree. Instead of seeking wood elsewhere, as they had been in the habit of doing, they began to burn the twigs that fell under the balanza in order to maintain their fire, the fire it had given them.

The tree cursed them. They were thus preyed upon by illness and bad feelings: vindictiveness, hatred, jealousy. The wounds they /23/ inflicted upon themselves in order to give blood and regain their youth no longer healed and became infected.

773 825 A few among them tried to remedy this new state of affairs. Eight of the eldest men went up to the balanza and, in spite of the heat it gave off in order to repel them, they made incisions on their tongues and offered it their blood. The tree was surprised and first gave out a sort of sigh, for it appreciated the sacrifice. Finally it spoke to them and announced the coming of death. But because of their submission and the sacrifice they had consented to, it transformed them into birds, tatugu kononi (literally: little birds of fire). In order to accomplish this, it demanded that they rub their backs against the tree trunk until all their blood was gone. The men cried out in pain in the process, but just as they were about to die, their souls were transformed into birds. Their flesh and skin penetrated into the tree; their bones mingled with the white bark and the marrow became the red fruit which, from that day on, ripened on the tree. Since that time, the "human flesh" which is the wood of the balanza is rarely put to profane use. These first eight elders transformed into birds were subsequently venerated by men (1).

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1. In particular by all blacksmiths. Since their transformation the birds tatugu kononi supposedly live near the balanza and respect a certain number of taboos: they must not separate but must live communally outside of villages. They are responsible for fire; though incapable of lighting it, they have the power, by their very presence, to keep it up or to put it out. A twig of damp

782 /91/ Actually the altars from the region of Ségou originate mostly
778 in Toko, a settlement situated to the south of the town where the king's
326 blacksmiths lived. The ancestor of these blacksmiths is buried in the rocks which border Toko and from which the stones used as altar are

Fig. 5.—Stone altar, fara ba, of Banankoroni, consecrated to ancestors. It is stuck into the ground above the skull and bones of an albino, hoes, and a circumcision knife. The ritual drawing traced during the ceremonies of the renewal of the year represents the torches and the whips of the Kworé, 3 men and 4 women, which recall the number 7, image of the creation (Informant's drawing).

carved. If a village chief wants to obtain one he sends a delegate to Toko. This emissary receives from the blacksmith the stone appropriate to the function of the altar and the quality of the person

782 778 requesting it. Thus, a black stone is given to those who have broken a /92/ taboo, a stone of two colors to a stranger, and the red stone "rounded and polished by the ancestors" to those whom one wishes to honor. [326]

The stone altars which are innumerable (both private and public ones) generally represent the ancestors. When they are placed in the fields they receive the sacrifices offered in their name for helping the crops. At the intersection of narrow roads and on the public square, they assure the stability of ancestral customs.

3. The Bambara also sacrifice on manufactured objects which bear the general name of boli (literally, to run) and which are the equivalent of the altars although they are of an entirely different nature than the preceding ones. Their origin is different. To the initiates they originate in the twelfth bangini which gave birth to the day (see pp. 30-31). In the shape of "globules" they were released in space by Faro as he descended to the earth; they were collected by the spirits of the air and of the ground into which some of them penetrated, and were later given to men (1).

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1. The popular belief has it that the eight principal boli of the Bambara were brought back from Mecca by the famous Makanta Djigui, a personage whose name is cited in numerous prayers (particularly in the course of the ceremonies of the Komo). L. Tauxier attributes this tradition to Islam influence under the reign of Soundiata's successor, Malinké Kankan Moussa, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 (La Religion bambara, p. 287, n. 3).

The name of Makanta Djigui is cited in the device (burudyu) of the Komo: the chiefs of this important society carry their altars each year to the shore of the Niger near the village of Tikko on the spot where the historical canoe which transported him is said to have sunk.

1: Dieterlen--153b E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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(a) Pot dipping after firing (Konodimini).

Plate IV

(b) Communal anvil, kula, of the blacksmiths (Konodimini).

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1. These three plants are respectively: Andropogon (Hyparrhenia) hirtus, Digitaria debilis, Cenchrus catharticus.

before the cultivation of cotton and cereals was known to them, the Bambara worked the soil with wooden sticks around the base of those grasses whose seeds they then sowed. As their stock of tools developed, they began to make the first hoes and axes. In the case of the Mandé Bambara (2) the origin of these tools is linked with the history of the

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2. The names and the origin of tools of the Bambara of the Ségou region are different.

blacksmiths, numu, who form a kind of caste in this part of Africa as in many others. They practice endogamy, maintain joking relationships, senankuya, with other Blacks, and are in charge of certain cults dedicated to ancestors and to Faro (3).

3. On the myth of the divine origin of blacksmiths, see S. de Ganay, "Notes sur la théodicée bambara." See also infra, p. 53 n. 1

Before the discovery of metal, ancestors of the present blacksmiths worked with wood, then stone. From then on they bore the name of numu, a term which today is reserved exclusively for the artisans of iron, jirifa numu or farafa numu, according to whether they worked with wood or stone (4).

4. L. Desplagnes mentions the historical aspect of the origin and role of the Sudanese blacksmiths (Le Plateau central nigérien /The Central Nigerian Plateau/, p. 110).

The peoples issued from the intermixture of the ou, shepherds (Getules), with the ar, sedentary tribes (Fari), have already been pointed out in earliest antiquity by writers, historians, and geographers who called them Numidians. Salluste tells us that "The Faronsũ, in mixing with the

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getules (gne-Toules), formed the nation of Numidians.

But according to tradition, these half-breed Numidians, today called Noumous, were the first initiators among primitive peoples of the industrial arts; thereafter the title of Noumous was kept and applied to all blacksmiths."

And in the footnote on the same page: "But in Nigerian countries, this term for blacksmith, Noumou, does not necessarily contain the notion of a metallurgist."

/114/ All blacksmiths said to be of "pure blood," that is to say those who belong to the three families of Fané, Koumaré, and Balo, are descended from the Gwonna, who came from the underground village of Gwondougou and to whom goes the glory of having discovered iron.

According to informants, the word Gwonna comes from gwã̃, a name usually given to the hearth of the forge, which designates precisely the place from which the ore is extracted and where it is treated. The high furnace is called gwã̃ so. The gwã̃ tuku munu, extracting blacksmith, is the only one able to perform important rites. The word Fané derives from fã̃, which designates the forge in its entirety. Koumaré comes from kuma, word. It is the Koumaré who are charged [537] with the responsibility of debating in council meetings or in public gatherings. The word Balo recalls the fact that the bearers came to settle in former days on the shores of the Niger, ba.

The Gwonna are senãnku of the other blacksmiths. Moreover, in the villages where they live together with other artisans, they are by right the chiefs of the Komo and guardians of the sanctuaries where the ancestral tools are kept. Only if they fail in their obligation will the blacksmiths belonging to other families assume these duties.

The titles of the Gwonna are linked to the mythical origin of the forge which is under the domination of the Téliko spirits, masters of the air and wind, hence of the bellows and fire.

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They inherited them from the eight ancestors who, before the appearance of death, were transformed into bee eaters (tatugu kononi) by the balanza and who received the power to activate or to extinguish fire (1).

1. See p. 43.

The Téliko spirits, jealous of the independence of these new beings, resolved to subdue them and waged war on them. The birds, who had no weapons, bewailed and a Gwonna blacksmith took pity on them; he requested axes, hoes, and arrows from the men of his family and gave them to the birds, receiving in return the promise of revelations which would be useful to him. Having made this arrangement, the birds, armed with weapons, went to meet Téliko at the place called gonya. They used their weapons in a gigantic conflict in which neither adversary could vanquish the other.

/115/ The birds then returned to earth and thanked the blacksmiths by teaching them three secrets necessary to the good progress of their work:

1. How to build their altars by mixing in a panther skin cold water, iron, and a stone, soul of the forge.
2. How to protect from the fire the hands of women potters.
3. How to make and consecrate the circumcision knife.

Since these revelations, the Gwonna venerate these teachers, thus raising the number of their ancestors to sixteen: the first eight transformed into birds who had not the use of speech, and the eight others who received the word from Faro.

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In each village the patriarch of the Gwonna holds the title of kotigi (literally, owner of things). He guarantees the custody of the ancestral tools deposited in a sanctuary and of the ritual objects which belong to the blacksmiths of the village, and which are kept in his home. In addition, he is the only one who may perform the rituals concerning these tools and the purifications.

The important position of the Gwonna family is translated into ritual. Whereas an ordinary blacksmith, after breaking a taboo, must request the intervention of the kotigi to purify himself, a Gwonna simply asks the members of his own family.

564 Every blacksmith is regarded as the holder of an excellent tere.
326 He is well-intentioned, affable, and never hurts anyone. It is easy
774 to make friends with him, to joke with him, even if one knows him but a short time. The senankuya relationships which he has with other Blacks also contribute to the cordiality of these ties.

[304] The good tere of the blacksmith is brought into play particularly at circumcision which is preferably entrusted to a Gwonna. Being circumcised by a blacksmith causes the wanzo to diminish rapidly, hastens the healing, and improves the tere. A blacksmith is reputed to have the power of transforming himself at will into an animal or a plant. In those places where hyenas are venerated as the animal [825] protectors of a village (dasiri), they are always considered as the blacksmith's ancestors who have undergone metamorphosis. (1).

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimi, situated 21 km. to the southwest of Ségou.

773 The ritual paraphernalia now preserved in each village comprise
564 models of all the tools manufactured by the blacksmiths since their
326 first appearance.
412 a. Wooden tools The craftsmen first used wood, gradually changing the shape of the objects. From a simple stick /116/ (generally in sunzun) (2) or from a rough-hewn block, they gradually made more

2. Diospyros mespiliformis. The wood of this tree is very hard.

perfect tools, obtaining the shape desired by rubbing and polishing on rocks.

773 The first weapon used in hunting was a throwing instrument in the
564 shape of a boar-spear, the semenkala (from kala, handle, Fig. 9, A).
326 Hewn from one piece, it comprised three distinct parts: (1) the
411 bulonda; (2) the semenu; and (3) the koli (literally, hook). Men threw the object with all their strength at the pursued animal or else they dug into the earth where their prey was hiding with the pointed end (semena) which was often poisoned with a viper's venom. The weapon was the object of blood sacrifices carried out on the koli and destined to increase its strength.

773 564 32 41 [172]

The first agricultural tool was the yirewolo (literally, noble, Fig. 9, B), thus named because of its antiquity, mogokoroba (literally, old person, ancestor).

b. Stone tools Later, craftsmen learned to use stone. They used neolithic axes called "thunder stones" (1) which were used as scissors.

1. The Bambara, like other Blacks of the Sudan, attributed divine origin to certain neolithic axes (see p. 71. It would seem that a great many primitive tools had been found by them in the area at the time of their arrival.

Those of the Gwondougou were at all times famous for their solidity. The craftsmen worked together and when they had rough-hewn their models, certain individuals among them were delegated to sharpen these by rubbing them on a rock.

The farakun (literally, stone head) (Fig. 9, D) was the first axe the handle of which was invented by an artisan who, having poisoned the sharp edge of his tool, wished to try it out on a tree. He sank the stone into a young tree trunk with the idea that the leaves would dry up of themselves. But he died without having ascertained the result. Later a passerby, having tried in vain to remove the stone from the tree, cut the wood above and below it, and in handling this new tool, was surprised at its efficiency. The use of the hafted axe spread among men who utilized the fiber of the nyama to tie the stone to the wood. In addition, the stone could be separated quickly from the handle and used as a knife to cut meat or bones. The handle was used as a pointed stick with which to dig in the ground and to attack animals.

It is probable that hafting was also applied to wooden hoes made in two sections and used /117/ for a long time in areas where there was no hard stone. In fact, a myth concerning the discovery of the cultivation of cotton, which preceded that of cereal grains, mentions the fact that men used to take their handles home, but left the ends of their hoes at the crossroads each day in honor of the local spirit.

c. Iron tools Finally, the Gwonna discovered iron and developed the science of metallurgy (2).

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2. The Blacks consider that the discovery of iron and metallurgy are due to the Gwonna. It is, however, not impossible that this technology was imported by craftsmen who came from the Mediterranean.

At a time when the men had left the village of Gwondougou, taking their altars with them, two girls left their home and went to live with two artisans of the Fané and Koumaré families.

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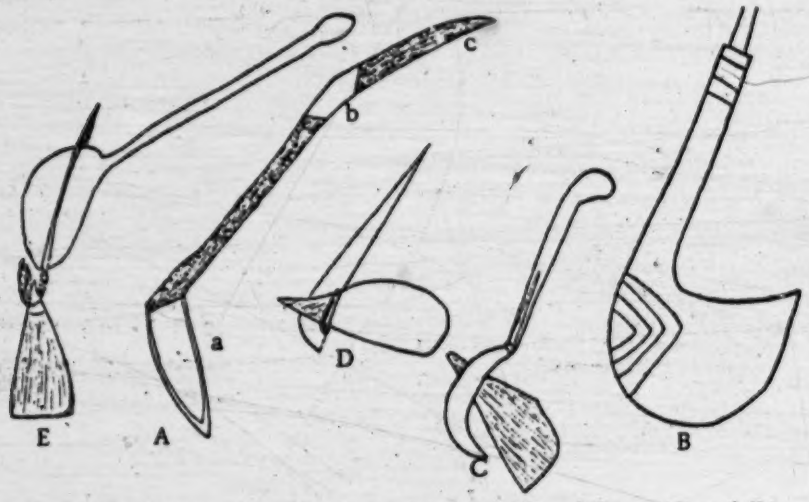

Fig. 9 —Weapons and tools of wood (A and B), of stone (C and D), of iron (E) of the ancient Bambara. (Drawing by an informant).

When the men returned to the village to get some hard stone which they would like to use, they were very much troubled not to find their girls. They dug the ground to search for them, thinking that they had been buried, since men in those days lived in laid-out underground holes. In the course of this work they discovered some rocks which were hitherto unknown to them and which are called farabele. The men thought these rocks beautiful and wished to use them. When placed in fire they were changed and became so hard /118/ that the hammers with which the men attempted to shape them split. The pieces of iron were then used as projectiles to replace the stones of the slings. But the blacksmiths, who had abducted the young girls and who had returned to the village with their wives, saw the new substance and suggested the idea of making axes out of it.

773 564 326 412 The first forged tool, the kongobwona (literally, to abandon hunger), is still used by blacksmiths today as a ritual axe (Fig. 9, E).

It is made up of a wooden handle terminating in an enlargement which forms its bulk, and pierced by a bent iron rod which in turn holds the cutting edge (farabye) of the axe proper. The handle is very long, allowing the man to work without bending over.

The tool justifies its name for it brought prosperity to the craftsmen. The symbolism of the different sections shows this: the enlarged part of the consecrated model, which each blacksmith keeps on his altar and which is the object of regular rituals, is hollowed out and holds money, millet, and copper. The iron rod which pierces it represents at its lower extremity the tongue of the oldest of the Gwonna, and at its upper extremity that of the youngest, thus recalling the actions and the words of those who discovered the metal for the benefit of all.

Later, blacksmiths manufactured other models of iron axes and hoes, copying those previously used, but reducing their size.

Each day the end piece of the wooden hoes was abandoned at the crossroads after they had been used in honor of the local spirit. The worker kept only the handle and carved a new tool for the following day. The handles of hoes and axes were considered to be people because they were impregnated with the vital force of those who held them. The farmer left the cutting edge (of stone or iron) in his field and brought home the handle which he placed on his mat at night.

[782] Weapons and tools were the objects of regular sacrifices. The handle was removed and the blood of victims would flow first into the hole used to secure it, then on the cutting edge, while the officiating person recited a prayer.

773 564 326 412 778 Today, the assemblages of ancient tools are called makorobaw ka minew (literally, tools of the great ancestor). Considered as the most respectable and precious /119/ testimony of their civilization, models of each object are kept in sanctuaries called makoroba so (literally, house of the ancestors) which are generally natural caves or holes dug in the ground, reminiscent of primitive habitations. These tools are identified with the ancestors who used them and who were, long before the organization of religious societies, the object of a regular cult. That is why, in deference to this fundamental hierarchy, they are presented to the circumcised in front of the family altars (1) at the time of the initiation of the Komo. Similarly, they

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimini in the Ségou region.

773 564 326 412 778 are removed from the sanctuaries, honored, and replaced before the Komo altars during the agricultural and funerary rituals; to fail to observe this rule would constitute the breaking of a taboo and entail the most serious disorders.

In the course of the annual ceremony consecrating the dead, these tools are carried to the cemetery and receive as many victims as do the dead, for they represent the ancestors.

The kotigi brings them to the same place on two other occasions: during the agricultural ceremonies carried on after the growth of the ear of corn and after threshing the harvest. Axes and hoes are presented one by one at the tombs of the dead and then, reunited in the center of the cemetery, each of them is used once to cut a branch or to dig the soil. This ritual gesture recalls the use which the ancestors made of them.

The Forge

326 826 The blacksmith establishes his workshop under a shed, usually located in one of the squares or at the entrance to the village. It is the simplest of its kind and involves a minimum of equipment. The forge represents the craftsman: the furnace his body, the bellows his testicles, the blast pipe his penis, the fire his head. When the red hot metal is beaten with the hammer, a replica of the gosilãnde, which symbolizes the universe, the sparks are the lightning and thunder bolts.

326 778 The altar of the forge, sometimes situated to the west of the hearth, contains blackened hoe, pickaxe and axe handles, coal (fininkoro, literally, old coal) ashes kneaded with clay (buguri, literally, ashes of the hearth), all of which belonged to former owners, and finally an axe kongobwona called "mother of the altar," a smaller replica of the ancestral axes.

The bulk of the wood which holds the iron hooks and the blade /120/ is hollowed out and forms a kind of storage divided into three compartments.

The upper one contains money so that whatever happens, the blacksmith will have means to live.

In the central compartment are placed copper and iron, metals which the blacksmith works, as well as water, basic element and preferred seat of Faro, master of the word.

326 778 243 The lower compartment contains millet from a field called kongobwona foro, reserved for the needs of the cult of the forge. This land is placed under the guardianship of the patriarch belonging to the Gwonna family, and its upkeep is assured by the community. The seeds are given by each blacksmith to the old man who sows them himself. The work of cultivation and threshing is done communally. The millet is stored in the old man's granary and each blacksmith receives a share. This share is not eaten, but is put aside. From time to time the artisan takes a few seeds which he places as an offering on his altar, and which remain for a time in the compartment reserved for them; then they are considered to have been eaten by the axe and are removed and replaced by others. Part of the millet is kept as seed for the following year.

326 778 789 Each compartment is open and the blacksmith may insert his fingers; if his earnings are insufficient, he rubs his body and tongue with the hand which he has just dipped into the pocket containing money; the price, set by the spoken word, will not be questioned by the client. If he goes to work in his field, he places his hand into the millet each morning to draw upon the strength it contains and to improve the results of his agricultural work. If he burns himself while working at the forge, he dips his fingers into the third compartment and cools himself in Faro's water. It is this same water which a young artisan must drink at the beginning of his apprenticeship.

326 778 776 The triangular iron, farabye, which constitutes the axe proper is placed under the power of three spirits belonging to the group of air spirits: A gayru who revealed iron to men; Tengu who taught them Faro's supremacy; and Gulle. The first two are the masters of the bellows and direct the work as a whole; the third does their bidding and teaches men the technology of ironwork (1). When the owner

1. The spirit would have refused to teach the blacksmiths the working of copper and gold, as these two metals belonged to Faro who reserved for himself the right to use them. Since iron was black he had abandoned its use to the spirits of the air.

of the altar dies, the /121/ axe is removed and placed in the village sanctuary where the ancestral tools are kept. But the remaining objects are inherited by the son. [428]

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778 In addition, in each blacksmith's home, a replica of the kongobwona axe preserved in the common sanctuary, constitutes the family altar, passed on from father to son, on which the interested party offers to his ancestors regular or occasional sacrifices. Sometimes it also possesses a small iron plate upon which is engraved a drawing representing the creation and in particular the "spirals of the creative spirit at the cardinal angles," the multiplication sign, etc. The angles of this object are drawn up to indicate that the world is lifting itself up, awakening, and constantly reviving.

The forges of the village artisans are generally grouped in a public square, around a large anvil, kula, held in a wooden piece forming its base and buried deep in the ground (Pl. IV, b). In front of this communal anvil judicial affairs are settled, such as marriages or broken agreements; before it vows are pronounced and solemn promises are made to the boli. It is also here that the purifications for breaking taboos take place.

The blacksmiths are also communal owners of a certain number of ritual objects which are usually kept by the kotigi and brought out for religious ceremonies. Among these, the nege dyun (literally, mother of iron) (1) is a lump of iron forged in the likeness of the

1. Dyun means "mother" in archaic language.

semẽkala (see Fig. 9, B), on which the kotigi draws small lines. Some of these lines represent the heads of each of the Gwonna blacksmiths; others, well separated from the first, recall the heads of the artisans belonging to other families. The whole symbolizes the total number of blacksmiths in the village. The nege dẽ (literally, son of iron) is a ritual bell also decorated with lines representing members of the blacksmith families.

After it has been made, the nege dyun is placed in the sanctuary of ancestral tools. It remains there two or three months in order to become saturated with the strength of the ancestors and from time to time receives the blood of sacrifices performed at night. It is after this period that it is placed with the nege dẽ in the kotigi's home.

Each artisan offers individual sacrifices on the kongobwona axe kept in his home as well as on the objects /122/ contained in the altar of his forge: at the same time his tools receive libations of boiled millet mash.

326 In addition, each year the blacksmiths join together and offer a
778 sacrifice on the communal anvil. All tools are placed around it,
796 overflowed with the blood of the victims.

An annual ceremony which also brings the craftsmen together has the purpose of asking Faro to help in the cooling of the wrought iron and to give the water into which the iron is dipped the strength to fulfill its function. Assembled before the kotigi's forge, they bring a certain number of tomatoes which are first presented to the altar, then to the ancestral axe farakun, on which each one in turn licks with his tongue.

Keeping their mouths closed so as not to let the strength thus gathered escape, they all walk toward the river, while one of the [534 participants strikes up, on the ritual bell (nege dɛ̃) with a lump of 533] (nege dyun), the rhythm called klide fo (literally, rhythm of the sons of the testicles) (1) addressed to the one-arm blacksmith, the

1. Kli dɛ̃, "son of the testicle," is one [522] of the ritual jokes addressed to the blacksmiths by their senãnku.

bolokuruni, Faro's companion. Once on the bank, the kotigi undresses and throws himself into the water. When re reappears on the surface, all the participants open their hands the better to seize the strength of Faro and his companion, which the man is supposed to bring back. They rush to help him dress and the one who succeeds in touching him believes he receives Faro's special favors.

The tomatoes are then squashed into a gourd and the pulp is thrown into the river at a deep spot where each participant draws water and drinks to communicate with Faro. The group then returns, bringing back in the gourd a little water into which each one dips his individual axe, starting with the patriarch who, at the end of the ceremony, drinks up the rest.

326 If a woman is sterile, she asks the help of the three spirits protect-
778 ing the forge as they have the reputation of being very prolific.
842 Without her presence, the blacksmith crouches before the altar with his hands spread out, his head lowered, and prays. The woman must then swear to respect scrupulously the taboo of the invoked spirits, which is to pronounce their name. She may also ask the blacksmith to implore the help of the ritual ashes of the altar.

326 784 Taboos Provided with vital force and a soul, ni, the forge, a living being, is surrounded by taboos aimed at protecting its material and spiritual integrity.

These taboos, numbering seven, are peculiar to the forge and to the altars which it contains; they concern not only the /123/ blacksmiths, but also his clients, the passers-by, whatever sex they may belong.

[252] 1. None may cook meat on the fire of the forge; it would be equivalent to "eating the meat of the Soba spirits." To break this rule deprives the fire of its strength and causes the abdomen of the person breaking the taboo to swell (1).

1. It is said of the culprit: soko dyeni bala, fa ta sababu yalla: "he is full of meat cooked on the fire of the forge."

2. No insult may be uttered near the forge, particularly if it is of a sexual nature (2). This would be equivalent to insulting the fire;

2. Neni teke fã nda la: "Insults are not to be spoken at the door of the forge."

the flame would waver and, despite the bellows, no heat would rise from the hearth.

[201] 3. The sole of the foot and the palm of the hand are never presented to the fire, for the forge is alive and just as these same gestures made towards another human being would bring about physical disorders, so the various parts of the forge are vulnerable and may break (the hammer or anvil) or tear (the membrane of the bellows) (3).

3. Se ndege tere te jira fa na: "The tere of the sole of the foot must not be presented to the forge."

4. Any quarrel or misunderstanding disturbs the forge, upsets it, and harms the work (4).

4. Dadyuguya, filibatya, kunasirinlenya, konodyuguya te kẹ fã nda la: "Meanness,

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hypocrisy, humiliation, and cheating
are not done at the door of the forge."

5. Envy, jealousy, and ill humor are generally bad for the blacksmith who loses his "turn of the hand." He must "have a pure heart" (1).

1. Numu te keleya note i bolo na tye:
"The blacksmith must not be jealous,
otherwise his hand is spoiled."

6. A mirror must never be brought near the forge; it would take hold of its soul which resides in the axe at the altar (2).

2. Dugalle te gere fã na a kanana; ka fã
ni tá: "The mirror must not be brought near
the forge; it will take the soul from the forge."

[834] 7. Sexual relations near the forge prevent its functioning (3).

3. Noa te gere fa nda la: "No obscene
action may take place near the door of
the forge."

Breaking the taboos of the forge is equivalent to attacking the virility of the blacksmith, for the bellows are his testicles. Thus the artisans present themselves naked before the culprit to shame him; he is seated on the communal anvil and water in which large [783] millet (keninge) has been soaking is poured over his head to purify the instrument (4).

4. If the fault is irreparable, the kneeling chief crushes three grains of large millet (keninge) on the anvil, a gesture which symbolizes the death of the culprit whose name he pronounces at the same time.

●326 783 /124/ The affected owner then proceeds to reconstruct his forge. Having taken a piéce of charcoal, a piece of iron, a piece of leather, and his tools, he goes to the kotigi to ask him to perform the necessary purifications. In the presence of the parents gathered around the forge and in front of the culprit, the kotigi officiating alone, crushes the iron, leather, and charcoal, and then goes to fetch the kongobwona axe kept in the sanctuary of ancestral tools. He places all this before the altar facing the east, and recites the following prayer over a gourd filled with water, which he holds in his hands:

"You forge, ancient thing, you belong to us, to us Gwonna; so and so has broken his taboo, I am his senãnku and am apologizing to you for this deed. I have said: forge; I have said: blacksmith of Gwondougou" (1).

1. E fã, fẽ koro, e ye an gwonna ta ye; kari macina ye tnẹ tyẽ, ne ye senãnku ye, nye delili kẹ a ko la; ngo fã; ngo gwondugu numu.

The axe is then washed in water to which has been added some earth taken out of the hut. Next, the officiator completely demolishes the tainted forge and rebuilds it with the mud thus obtained while one of the Gwonna witnesses keeps a little of this earth in a piece of cloth as a testimony to the reconstruction.

The blacksmith slits the throats of two roosters over the new forge while the ingredients groundup by the kotigi are placed on the altar. The following day, accompanied by his parents, he goes to ask the chief of the Komo to proceed with the purification. The members of the society meet at his home and the masker whistles into the forge to chase away ultimately the miasmas provoked by the breaking of the taboo. The fowls brought by the participants are sacrificed on the forge and all join in drinking beer offered by the interested party. The following day, the chief of the Komo calls for the latter's wives. Each in her turn, they place their heads on the anvil, an act which chases away the nyama which they have been concealing since the offense was committed, and then leave on it, cowrie shells and kola nuts, as an offering.

Pottery

323 The ancient Bambara did not know about pottery. At the time they
773 lived in caverns, they let their meat dry in the sun on the rocks. Next, they manufactured receptacles by hollowing out stones, of which certain unused millstones /125/ seen today are copies. When they had invented fire, they cooked meat by spitting it with skewers of green sunzun wood and by exposing it to flames and live coals.

Later, they shaped and dried vessels of coarse clay, imitating the hollowed-out stones. One of these vessels, which was exposed to the fire in order to cook the food it contained, was observed to have changed color, hardened, and become more resistant. In this way they developed the technology of making pottery at a time when they still had only wooden tools.

323 Since this technology is related to the invention of fire, the wives
326 of the blacksmiths were the first to practice it.(1). Today they form
778
575

1. The different techniques of pottery making were supposedly revealed to the village of Gwondougou (see p. 155) by the Soba spirits of the crossroads.

a society (tõ) in each village and own many altars entrusted to the care of the head of the society.

The principal altar, the dyo kala, which represents the thumb of the potters, is made of wood carved in the shape of a thumb and engraved with symbolic lines. To learn her trade, each initiate is lightly touched on the head with it. The head of the society spills her blood over it in the case of a broken taboo affecting the society. But its principal function is to be the receptacle for the spiritual forces of the group: upon a member's death, this object, placed upon the corpse, gathers up the soul which escapes from the body.

[252] In certain villages, the pots with holes, ñintin, used for cooking couscous, are placed near the village upon the pile of ashes from the great hearth where the pots are fired (see Pl. IV, a); they also serve as altars at the time when the potters are consecrated.

323 Since her childhood the potter, following the example of her
561 seniors, practices kneading and shaping little pots, bokofani (liter-
575 ally, little clay pots). After excision at the required age, she joins

323 Faro. These places have as taboos the wearing of indigo and pregnancy.
317 No pregnant woman may approach them without provoking the death
784 of the child she is carrying, thus ultimately impairing the durability of pottery and seriously harming the society of which she is a member.

323 An annual sacrifice is offered by the potters at the end of the winter
796 season when, the level of the river having dropped and the banks lowered, they return for the first time to collect the clay which they need. Dressed in white, they bring out their hoes and the sickle with which they cut the damp grasses used to cover the pots on the hearth during firing, while the head of the society carries the altars. The objects are placed in a pile on a bed of nyama fibers used for separating them from the ground. The throats of two red roosters are cut open over this pile while a prayer is addressed to Faro, requesting authorization to take the /127/ mbogo pasa during the year, and seeking his protection and help for the work of the society's membership.

The potters make an annual offering to their altars on the day their husbands sacrifice on the forges. Immediately after the libations, they come and squat before the forge altar on which they throw some ten cowrie shells. They then go to the ñintin, undress, and present to it their genitals from the front and from the back, this gesture being an indication of their submission to the spirits of pottery which are the same as those of the forge. Still naked, they circle the pile of ashes left from the last firing and light a big bonfire; this fire attracts the bee eaters, tatugu kononi, which circle over the flames. They shoot some down with a sling, cook them, and reduce them to ashes which they mix with karite oil; they rub their bodies with this mixture before purifying themselves by going through the flames. As an offering to the spirits, they then throw pots on the fire which they put out before returning home.

323 The potters cultivate together a small ritual field in which a fe-
2444 male twin sows white peas, tikaninkuru, symbols of their right hand. The produce of this harvest is eaten communally on a mound, walawala, after an offering of several seeds is made to the altars and tools. A potter whose tools are broken by the fire must go through a purification with the products of this field.

326 The wives of blacksmiths, whether or not they are potters, are
304 skilled in practicing excision on young girls.

852 304 "the unknown in creation" (see pp 23 and 24), recall man's existence in this state. Consequently he is conscious of the unknown and has the possibility of apprehending it. These scars act upon the tere of the child and give him at the same time strength, courage, virtue, as well as the strength to penetrate the knowledge of the invisible (1).

[842] 1. They may be redrawn at the root of the nose of an adult who has despaired of having any children, or on the thigh of a woman who wishes to be fertile. These scars, drawn at birth, are not the only ones which the Bambara wear. See S. de Ganay, "On a Form of Cicatrization among the Bambara."

852 553 326 In a blacksmith's family, the name is given near the paternal forge. In the presence of all the village artisans, the kotigi shaves the head of the newborn while an elder prepares seven small sticks, over each one of which he pronounces the name of an ancestor. The kotigi, whose eyes are blindfolded, pulls out in succession three sticks from the group; the third determines the name which he immediately proclaims. While the women chant, the father removes from his altar the kongobwona axe as well as the other ritual objects. The throat of a sheep is cut over all these objects while a prayer is recited. The newborn's head is rubbed first with the axe, then with shaved off hair saturated with sacrificial blood. This gesture introduces the child into the family group. Next he receives the scars of the blacksmiths.

Circumcision

304 561 Whereas in former times circumcision was mandatory and performed upon young men (about twenty years), it is now practiced at an early age if the parents are wealthy enough to afford the expenses involved.

/180/ Because of this fact, a child of eight years may be circumcised with an adolescent of sixteen to eighteen years, whose parents are poor and have only slowly accumulated the articles necessary for the ceremony. These two boys will belong to the same age grade (flã̃), and will be comrades (flani) all their lives, having the same rights and duties. Age thus has a restricted role in social relations.

304 throughout the seclusion, the cap itself guaranteeing protection of his
292 head against the rays of fire from the fifth sky, koblenkaba (see Fig. 14).

304 Seven large black dots, vertically disposed, represent the child, 3,
292 and his dya, 4, as well as the man, 3, which he will later become, and
531 his future wife, 4. They also insure his protection from east to west. The two other dots insure it from north to south. The cross of small dots recalls the sumangolos, the "realization of the world" (1) and the

1. See p. 56, Fig. 4.

purification obtained after the operation and the loss of the wanzo. Eight tassels (Faro's number) are placed on the cap, whose fringes were spun by a grandmother and are sewn on to "attract the forces of space." A ninth at the top is blackened with the spirit's earth. With his head thus covered, the circumcised boy is placed in the protective and purifying light of Faro. To operate upon a child without putting the cap on him would in fact amount to "bowing down before the acts of Mousso Koroni."

304 On his part, the blacksmith-circumciser makes preparations for the
326 operation, the essential instrument of which is a knife called boloko
413 kumba moru (literally, knife head, mother of the circumcision). He himself has forged it and carries it in a small leather sheath hung from his hip (see Fig. 15) (2).

[582]

2. The endogamy among blacksmiths is attributed to their role in circumcision and to the fact that their tools, especially this knife, are impregnated with the wanzo of the adolescents.

The handle is slipped into a sort of iron sheath closed at one extremity called kurukun (literally, ball head) and open at the other called sukala (literally, sorcerer's handle). It is forged from one piece with the blade dyomuru fala (literally, orphan of the knife) and called "without pity" in archaic language.

The knife and its handle on the one hand, together with the metal sheath on the other, symbolize the person of the circumcised boy and the foreskin which is to be removed.

304 326 532 413

Before the operation, the blacksmith washes the handle, an act which parallels /182/ the washing of the penis, and draws on the blade ritual designs either in charcoal or with boiled millet (1).

1. Some artisans have, once and for all, engraved the ritual designs on the blade.

The three figures ɲɛ mani saba (literally, three little male persons) represent the first three circumcised men (Gwonna, Gwondo, and Gwonkè) who belonged to the blacksmiths' families at the village of Gwondougou. Every descendant of these ancestors must be circumcised like them. In making the drawing the operator says:

"Gwonna, Gwondo, Gwonkè, you have discovered iron and you withstood the pain (of the first circumcision), you feel shame neither by night nor by day; our feet are placed in your footsteps; the iron did not shame you, let it not shame us; it is the will of Faro... attack, attack, attack" (these last three words are addressed to the knife)(2).

2. Gwonna, gwondo, gwonkè, aw ye neke damene, ka neke gale munyu, aw ma malo ɲu ani kle, an se daledo an se danola, neke maw malo a ka na an malo, faro hakili do, ɲu ɲu ɲu.

The four figures, muso mani nani (literally, four little female persons), are the first four excised women, the inventors of pottery, who were the wives of these blacksmith.

The bird is the tatugu koroni, the incarnation of the eight ancestors of the blacksmiths. It recalls that circumcision is painful, hard, hot, comparable to the effects of fire, and that it is necessary to labor and suffer in order to withstand the cutting knife. This is also what the artisan recalls when, as he operates the children, he sings several times over:

"The knife is hot; the timorous man cannot stand it. It is a purification" (3).

3. A ka gwã, ɲɛ jito tise ka muɲu, saniyali do.

304 The foreskin, which is tied by a string (drawn at the center of the
532 blade) at the moment of the operation, is placed upon the pembele
413 (black rectangle) and the cutting knife is tapped with a small wooden mallet, gossilã (drawn at the tip of the knife). These three figures receive during operation the offering of the first spurt of blood from the circumcised boy.

The line, which crosses the blade along the middle, separates the bird and the ancestors who gave proof of courage from the instruments used for the circumcision. As a division it symbolizes first of all that each grade of circumcised boys must be considered apart from the others. This is its social meaning. But the delicacy of the line itself has a meaning which applies to the individual: each one must, in his own image, be morally /183/ simple, just, and sensitive. By conforming to the rule symbolically indicated by the design, the individual will become a member of the elite.

384 The date of the operation is fixed when Mousso Koroni's star, sigi
787 dolo (Sirius), rises in the evening at a certain point in the east (1).
821

1. See note 1 p. 47. To determine the date, however, the ndomo society may be consulted, which sometimes postpones it to keep its members longer.

After the boys to be operated have been counted, each gets ready, and on the appointed day the mother washes her son's penis with water in which an iron axe or hoe has been soaked. Then she prepares a dish
[262] of rice, ye farina to "dish of man's bravery," which the child eats before he is led to the place of the operation, called yorola sakole "reserved place," located in the bush.

304 When all are gathered together the blacksmith-circumciser operates
326 upon each one in turn after he has made them sit down in a circle on the ground. Pulling and twisting the foreskin, he ties it with the string which he keeps taut by securing its extremity between his toes. He next places the member upon the pembele, rests the knife /on the foreskin/ and taps /it/ with the wooden mallet. In this way he cuts off the foreskin while saying the following words:

"Circumcised one, your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, the father of that one too, the ear (the genitals) of the ancestors of the latter have withstood (the pain); you, yourself, withstand it as

304 326 /184/ they did. Faro, Teliko, Soba! You who are a man, your number is three; three of the penis, three of the twins, designs of the penis, it is the tradition, withstand it; Faro!" (ter) /repeat three times/(1).

1. Bolokodɛ i fa, i moke, o ta fa, o ta fa were, o ta fa klo masamaw ye munyu, i yere ka munyu u cǒko la, faro, teliko, soba, o ye ce ta saba ye, wulu wo, flani wo, kolo nyeke, lada do, i ka munyu; faro (ter).

304 532 413

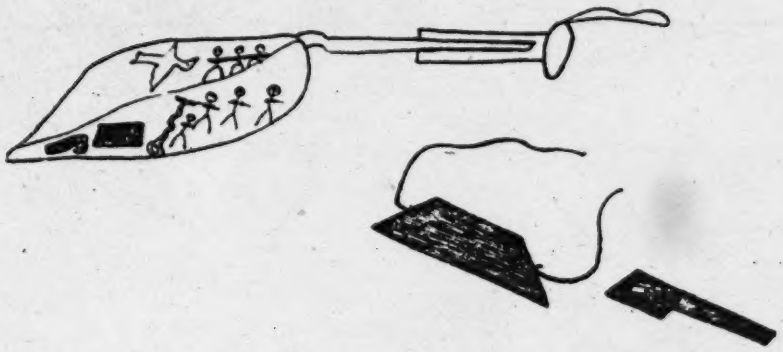

Fig. 15. — The circumcision knife decorated with ritual designs: three men and four women (representing the number seven); the bee eater symbolizing fire; the string; the small board; and the hammer used for the operation (these last two objects are reproduced on a larger scale to the right). (Drawing by an informant.)

304 326 831 After the removal, the operator makes scars upon the child's penis, called faro nyeke (literally, signs of Faro). Under the muscle wulu dyuru (literally, rope of the penis), a small hole is carefully made. Since the penis is considered a source of strength, the muscle which maintains it and erects it binds the circulation of the blood and helps man in all his acts. It is through this muscle that man transmits nerves to his children. A straight organ, firmly held in check, keeps the man and his descendants from numerous illnesses; the aim of this mutilation is to obtain complete and well formed foreskins and clitoris in the children of the party concerned. After the perforation, the operator places in the orifice a little pepper and tomato juice while saying:

304 326 843

304 "Strong (when you form) the child, (you who form) the child (in
326 the) womb, give it to Faro" (1).
843

1. Fariña dɛ̃, dɛ̃zo dɛ̃, i ka di faro ma.

The embryo, placed in the feminine womb by Faro, receives force and virility from the pepper and is developed with the help of the tomato.

304 Two small holes are carefully made symbolizing man and his dya,
326 while the following prayer is recited:

"Two holes of the penis; I draw the twins and I do it well, the skin of the person is captive, the skin of the person (gives) the twins; withstand them; Faro" (ter) (2).

2. Wulu wo fla, flani mba ti ka nɛ̃,
moko wolo ye dyo ye, moko wolo ye
flani nye, i ka munyu faro (ter).

"The skin of man, they say, and his entire body are miserable, captives. He is condemned to work, sweat, and suffer. But these two perforations indicate that man is always called upon to procreate twins, the visible images of Faro. Lacking them, he may have numerous children who will return to him, in sweat and work, the seed which he has placed in the maternal womb and which gives shape to the seeds given by Faro."

At the root of the penis, small lines, kolo nyeke, are made with the knife while the operator says:

"Mark of the penis, the genital organ receives this scarification because of the child (whom it will procreate); it is for this that man may be courageous; the one who has (this scar) is respected; great Faro, satiation of Faro" (3).

3. Kolo nyeke, wulu ti kũye dɛ̃ koye,
a ye ɛ̃ɛ fariña ko ye, min ya ke bonyedo,
faro ba, faro fa.

/185/ These recall the scars inflicted upon man's body and symbolize the desired multiplication of his offspring. Finally, they indicate the superiority of the one who has withstood and accepted pain.

304
326

If the patient has inherited the ni and the dya of a child who died just before his birth in the family (in the narrow sense), the penis is perforated while the following prayer is recited:

"You, so and so, the sons of your fathers are dead, may you replace them night and day, the hole in the penis has been made on you; "Faro" (ter) (1).

1. E kari macina, e fa dew bana, e ka o lu soro su ani kle la, wulu wo ke la e la; faro (ter).

This perforation designates him to procreate the children his father has lost.

Seated in a circle, all the circumcised boys bleed upon the ground into individual holes, nyama bla dinge (literally, hole in which the nyama is left) (2), dug between their parted legs, thus passing on to

2. Dinge is a word in the ancient language.

the impure earth their wanzo and a part of their tere. Meanwhile, the circumciser recited the following prayer:

"Blood of the penis, blood of the transfer of the wanzo, blood which chases the wanzo, enter the hole, may you pay (my debt), may you protect me (against the nyama of the foreskin), against bad fortune, against space; o mound" (ter) (3).

3. Wulu dyoli, wanzo fili dyoli, wanzo gẽ dyoli, i bi dõ dinge kono, i kã sara, i kã kisi a makunangoya, i ka kisi kene ama; walawala (ter).

Then, he kneads a bit of blood-covered earth, the principle of which, bwa, is stronger than the wanzo (4) and makes from it a kind

4. The word bwa is provisionally translated by "essence, extract." One says dukukolo bwa or seke, "principle or extract of the earth."

of dressing which he applies to the wounds. In this way the child also

304 recovers part of his tere. The organ is then held up by means of a
326 small apparatus, mine naw, made of a millet stem split in two in the shape of a fork.

"Circumcision is a sacrifice" (1). It is only valid if blood has run,

1. Bolokoli ye saraka ye.

and any patient who has not wet the ground with his blood is wounded on the thigh by the circumciser. The same is true for a child born
[732 without a foreskin. This detail must, moreover, be kept secret by
582] the members of his age grade, since the revelation of a malformation might prevent the individual concerned from contracting a marriage (2).

2. A woman might believe that these malformations are the sign that the man who was operated upon has not lost his wanzo, a fact which would be a definite obstacle to marriage.

/186/ When all is finished, the operator, holding the foreskins in his hand, says these words before burying them:

"We have transferred the wanzo of the circumcised child, may the tere be well" (3).

3. Ãn ye dẽ bolokole wanzo fili la, tere ka ñe.

304 After this, the circumcised boys have their caps put first on their
292 napes and foreheads representing the east-west direction, and then on
561 the sides of their heads representing the north-south direction. All their strength resides from then on in the headpiece which they will wear night and day, without removing it, during the entire period of seclusion.

304 The approach to the site of the operation is formally forbidden to
784 women and uncircumcised males. The one who might go there out of
561 curiosity "would contract the wanzo" (wanzo ba nofe, "the wanzo follows him"). Any uncircumcised boy who might break this law would have to take the consequences at the time of his own operation

791 Every magician (soma) (2) has his own methods: one

2. A sorcerer is a suba (See Chapter 7).

may be intuitive and work from an inner light; another may operate only by deductive divination. All who lay claim to real power submit to rules which are often strange and rigorous and which dominate the most trifling activities of their lives. And all are fanatically determined to keep the secrets which, in their own eyes no less than in the eyes of the uninitiated, are the foundation of their mysterious powers.

[143] Very properly, the range of their investigations and their action is without limits, since everything is impregnated by the energy which is everywhere and in everything and which perhaps is everything, material form being merely one of its manifestations.

789 It is worthy of note that artisans are subject to the same
463 dislike as that for ill-famed magicians. It is not too hazardous
791 to deduce that manual labor once consisted of magic rites which were held to be indispensable in conquering matter. This is still evident in the case of blacksmiths and hunters.

791 Everywhere in the Sudan, blacksmiths are considered
326 and, indeed, behave like magicians. The extraction of iron is surrounded by essentially magic rites in which only blacksmiths may participate. After ritual preparation, they work naked while the job lasts and return to normal life only for a certain time after the work has been completed; even then they have to observe special rules. Their work is commonly thought to be tinged with magic. Their tools are impregnated by this invisible energy and, on certain days, the hut in which they are kept becomes a sort of temple, with the blacksmith as priest. The chronicle (1) attributes to fa Sinè Dyara, a blacksmith who

1. See p. 112.

could understand the language of the birds, a role especially helpful to the Massa-si.

●326 791 Raffenel has given us an interesting portrait of one of these Bambara blacksmiths, whom he called father Niany, whose guest he was at Foutobi (Kaarta). He saw him act successively as fa, as priest of the manes and of the guardian spirits of the family, as doctor, and as exorcist. He was always alert, always excited and ever watching for the thousand manifestations of the invisible and hastening either to cooperate with them or to force them to do his will.

752 Here are some excerpts concerning the highly characteristic personage, father Niany:

"I saw a small child die of a snake-bite," reports Raffenel (2); "the poor creature was hideous and swollen up

2. In Nouveau voyage au pays des nègres [A New Journey to the Land of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 417.

like a balloon. Its mother had laid it [144] down in a field of millet which she was hoeing. A snake appeared (1) and bit the

[137]

1. "These snakes are 50 centimeters long and about 4 centimeters in diameter. Their back is gray, with very conspicuous black rings around the body. They have white bellies and a flat head rounded at the end. The part nearest the tail is covered on the upper surface by a series of vertical scales covering about a quarter of the length of the body. The tail is much smaller in diameter than the body. They like the outskirts of villages and are markedly fond of the roofs of houses." (Raffenel)

child. The mother misinterpreted its cries and offered her breast. Soon, however, the swelling became evident and the child had died within 24 hours." ....

791
609
821 "Can one imagine being given such orders? All that was left for them to do was to ask for the moon and the stars."

791 Niany is typical of many Sudanese blacksmiths, at least
326 of those who actually practice their trade, and it is no wonder that the natives keep people of that caste at a safe distance and show them consideration, fear and a degree of scorn. For the Blacks, people as well as things connected with magic are inclined to take many forms.

791 Hunters also are magicians. One need only see a hunter
224 start off to recognize that this is true. His person and his equipment are covered with amulets that constitute a covering as well as an arsenal of magic weapons.

825 The Blacks have a different idea of animals from ours;
778 they too are powers with which one has to reckon. In proof of this, there is no animal, however tiny, which cannot be, at some time or other, very dangerous and therefore worthy of respect. So animals are addressed as "master" or "lord." The
[558] animals always to be feared are never called anything else: wara-ba means lion; sa-ma, elephant; ma-li, hippopotamus; bam-ma, [148] crocodile. Etymologically, all these names indicate "master" or "lord."

These terms are not meaningless; they attest a belief that supernatural power is incorporated in animal species. The attentions paid to animals have no other purpose than that of
825 conciliating the good-will of this power or, at least, of avoiding
789 its wrath. The common practice of using animal debris (skin,
[237] horns, tail, hair, offal, etc.) to make magic charms is an application of the principle of continuity of matter, of the individual and of the virtues peculiar to them. A rabbit's foot is tied to a
[843] pregnant woman's side in order to hasten the child's arrival; a small bag of lion skin will make the child brave and strong.

231 It seems likely that the domestication of animals is a
552 happy result of magic practices. These tamed creatures are held to be "weak ones" and are treated as such. However, some of
825 their names show a trace of the esteem in which they were once held and which is still shown on occasion: fa-li meaning "donkey" derives from fa meaning "powerful," just as nya-ri meaning "cat" derives from nya and has the same meaning, along with ba Meaning "goat."

643 so that he may keep separate the interests of his house and those of the country.

Nomination of the Fama. The title of Fama remains in the family around which the canton has grown. Power passes from older to younger brother until a generation dies out, then goes to the oldest brother in the next generation, for, as a general rule, the living male nearest to the original ancestor should reign. However, the history of Ségou shows us how certain Fama have tried to establish direct succession from themselves to their eldest son. But the
643 accession of the Fama is submitted to the ratification of a council
645 of notables which includes the following persons.

a. The young chiefs, male descendants in the first degree of the Fama; they are directed by the eldest among them, with the second eldest being his syere or heir presumptive.

b. The old masters who are the Fama's brothers.

c. Their sons and all circumcised fathers of families.

643 Power of the Fama. The power of the Fama is founded on custom and religion. He is the earthly representative of all the ancestors; he is the radiating center which gives life to all the society; he is the Word of his people. He decides the crops, regulates commerce, concludes alliances, declares wars, renders justice, imposes taxes. He is the guardian of custom and the legislator of new laws, the organizer of the time and space he governs. His word is very powerful and dangerous; his decisions are whispered in the
● [326] ear of a blacksmith, who repeats them aloud to the assembly. His very glance makes his subjects tremble, and they approach him grovelling, forehead in the dust. No quarrel may break out in his presence, no violence committed; his power over men and goods is
[645 absolute. Nevertheless, all his decisions are taken after consultation
646] with the notables and with the assembly of delegates from each village. If one of the members of the assembly disagrees with the Fama about a point of law, he gets up and leaves the meeting without saying anything, marking his disapprobation in this manner. When a law is
[695] passed by all the assembly, each member swears an oath, on the tomb of an ancestor or the altar of the komo [one of the mens' societies], in behalf of himself and his descendants.

b. Organization of Work

241 621 Work on the land is the only kind of work suitable for free men, for to work the land is to purify it. All agricultural operations [622 are set in motion by the dugu-tigi and are regulated by the fa who 591] assigns tasks by age classes. Each member of the community must work for it every day, except Monday and Thursday, from dawn to about 4:30 p.m. He may be helped, or even replaced, by his children and his captives. The rest of the time he may work for himself in his personal field or in the little fields situated along the water courses and the rivers, which are not periodically redistributed and are considered almost as personal and hereditary property. The fruit of this labor constitutes the personal savings of the community member.

316 423 The exploitation of the subsoil is governed by other rules which we still know only imperfectly. Like the soil, the subsoil belongs to the master of the land. Iron ore was extracted solely by the [324] blacksmith who paid the master of the land a rent in the form of hoes or axes. To exploit the gold mines, thousands of natives went in family groups to the placers at the beginning of the dry season. [63] The location of the placers was determined by the priests and changed every year. The men dig multiple small holes very close to each other, which may go very deep depending on the depth of the barren layer. When the calabashes of gold-bearing earth are brought up, the women wash the earth. The placers are abandoned at the beginning of the rains after three or four months of exploitation. Before the French occupation, gold was the exclusive property of the Fama and could in no case be the object of commerce. To- [439] day, gold is generally sold at the placers to Syrian, native, or European merchants, who have established veritable shops at the mining centers, shops which contain everything necessary for the miner's life.

463 554 The exercise of a profession other than the cultivation of the land is reserved to artisans who are accorded the insulting name of nyaman-kala, for only work on the land is noble work. These artisans form separate families in every Sudanese society, which has caused Europeans to call them, improperly, people of caste. They are divided into independent guilds.

463
554 The numu: blacksmiths, whose wives are generally potters.
[326] The smiths are the masters of fire, those who cook the sacred earth in order to extract the minerals or to fix the form of pottery.

The loro: coppersmiths.

The garanka: leatherworkers.

The kule: woodworkers, and sometimes saddlemakers.

The donso: hunters, who form powerful and feared associations.

The somono, or fishermen, who have a status a little less restricted than that of the artisans mentioned above.

The dyeli or griot, domestic factotums of a kind, who, although the most disdained of all these, are nevertheless the family archivists.

[563] One may add two Peul shepherd tribes, identified by Manson: the Dyanna and the Bouguena (1).

1. See Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].

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564 All of these artisans are endogamous and fixed in caste, father to son. However, the fact that a man belongs to a caste does not obligate him to exercise the caste trade.

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463 The most powerful guild is incontestably that of the black-
608 smiths. From their ranks are recruited all the priests, the Fama's interpreters, the well-diggers, the grave-diggers, the executioners, the circumcisers, etc. They are the sénanku of all the families and are in charge of all the purification rites.

554 The griot are equally feared, because of the power of their words and because they spread afar the renown of the chiefs.

564 The free man who marries a woman of caste marries beneath himself, and his children are looked down on.

[326] The purest blacksmith families are those of the Fané Balo;
[527] the purest griot those of the Koniaté. People of caste always remain at liberty; when they are captured during a war, they make themselves known and keep their status.

463 [64] These different guilds are sufficient to maintain in the
326 Bambara country a certain industry of a distinctly artisan and non-specialized type. Thus, the smiths work iron, copper, and wood to

463 make tools, farming implements in current use, furnishings, orna-
326 mental objects, bracelets, different kinds of rings. They also work gold and silver to make jewelry in filigree.

462 Weaving and basket-making are not done by the people of
286 caste, but by all men, or, formerly, by their house captives.
285 Primitive looms, worked by treadles, are set up outside of the houses in the shade of the trees. The men weave long bands of cotton for making clothes, loin-cloths, and blankets. These bands, several meters long, are sometimes made into rolls weighing as much as 30 kilograms and are carried off to market by the diula [531] (itinerant merchants). The Bambara practice dyeing, batik, and embroidery (done by the men).

433 All this industry remains of strictly local interest and is directed solely toward meeting the immediate needs of the community.

c. Division of Labor

462 The Bambara are essentially an agricultural people. Never-
857 theless, as all members of the society must contribute a certain amount of work to the community, the nature of this work varies according to the social classes and according to whether a man, a woman, or a child is involved. The following tables indicate how the work is divided.

1. Distribution of tasks according to A. Aubert.

Men	Women	Children	All
	Foodstuffs		
	Preparation of food and dolo (beer)		
	Sale of dolo		
Preparation of hives, setting them, gathering the honey	Bottling and sale of honey	Helping	

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the blacksmith. The doll is given the name of the dead infant, the
[304 child carries it with him to the circumcision, and, when he marries,
583] he buries the doll with a piece of wood representing the wife of the deceased.

845 Twins are replicas of Faro, their presence is beneficial, and they are considered invulnerable.

826 The albino is supposed to be the issue of sexual relations held
833 in sunlight, a breach of taboo. He, too, is a new being. His wanzo
904 is so active that the circumciser must take great precautions before operating on it.

826 He is considered to be endowed with special powers which
782 make him a choice victim for the sacrifices offered to the spirit of the water.

553 To the children of blacksmiths, the name is given near the
326 paternal forge in the presence of all the artisans. An old man prepares seven little sticks, giving each the name of an ancestor. Three of these are drawn at random from the group, and the third gives the name of the baby. The head of the baby is rubbed with the axe Kongobwona, and his shaved hair is soaked in sacrificial blood.

553 In the Bamako region two chickens or a sheep are sacrificed
782 to celebrate the name-giving. The distribution of the meat is made according to established custom. If it is a chicken, the patriarch receives the head and the gizzard, while the wing and white meat go to the old woman who washed the baby during the first eight days. If it is a sheep, the patriarch receives [91] the ribs (because they are a bulwark, and the patriarch is the defender of the village) and the heart; the blacksmith receives the shoulder; the infant's family gets the head (so that the infant will go ahead), the back (symbol of prosperity), and the limbs (supports one wishes the new-born to have); the blood which runs on the ground is destined for the infant's protective ancestors. Then the family divides the raw meat with the heads of family, and the old woman thus receives her part indirectly.

c. Circumcision

881 A male infant is born, but he still keeps (because of the
304 primordial twinship) the prepuce as the physical support of the female
831 sex. He will only be freed of this by circumcision. It is this operation that definitively determines his sexual qualification and renders him fit to contract marriage.

1 [i.e., the surviving child of twins. -Analyst]

b. Pottery

323 Pottery is entirely fashioned and fired by the women of the blacksmiths' caste, masters of the fire. The modelling is done in two ways, either by hollowing a mass of clay with the aid of a cylindrical stone (2), or by rolling a cylinder of clay around a mold. The

2. M. Griaule, Masques dogons [Dogon Masks].

[531]

decoration is generally a double line of chevrons imprinted around the neck and the foot by the potter's twisted bracelet. The firing is done in the open air over a wood fire.

c. The Forge

326 Wood, iron, metals in general, are fashioned by the blacksmiths. The blacksmith's workshop and the objects he makes are simple, but they are rich in symbolic representations. "The forge represents the artisan: the furnace is his body, the bellows his testicles, the blast pipe his penis, the fire his head. When the red-hot iron is beaten by the hammer, which symbolizes the universe, the sparks are the lightning and the thunderbolt." (3) With his

3. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

rudimentary tools spread on the ground under a shelter, the artisan forges all farming instruments, the principal one being the hoe. The 412 hoe, [97] according to its shape, is considered to be male or female. 831 The female hoe has a short handle with an ovoid swelling at the end, [801] into which sticks the point of an iron triangle. The three sides of this triangle are three arcs of a circle; three, symbol of masculinity, represents here the clitoris, the male principle which sustains the [773 241] double, the dya, of the woman. (According to myth, it was with the aid of this part of the body that the first being of female sex inaugurated agricultural labors.) The male hoe has a slightly trapezoidal iron part which is attached to the handle in the same manner. The four sides symbolize the femininity of man sustained by the prepuce. Thus,

304 The Bambara decorate their faces and bodies with numerous
773 scarifications, with the aim of conferring on the wearer the qualities symbolized by the scars. By their influence on the character and temperament of an individual, they help him to come up to the ideal man. These marks are associated with the myth of the origin of agriculture They are eight small scars: two vertical ones at the root of the nose, three under each eye. They imitate the facial marks of the mythical being, half man, half animal, who taught men how to cultivate the soil. (1)

1. S. de Ganay, "On a form of cicatrisation among the Bambara," Man.

f. Arrangement of the Settlements

The Bambara village follows rules of development which al-
361 low a stranger to recognize the disposition of the huts immediately and to single out a chief's house, that of a blacksmith, or that of any other member of the society. In fact, the village is built to the north or east of the protective tree. To the south of the village,
[778] is the sacred wood, dwelling place of the chief of the spirits, where the religious ceremonies and the initiation rites take place. As more families come to live in the village, they build their huts around that of the chief, except to the east, for the chief must see the sun rise. The oldest son of the chief, his eventual successor, will have his own plot near his father's. The house of the Komo is situated outside of the village, to the south or west, hidden in a wood or a thicket. At the edge of the village is a round cabin, the house of the Nyama, in the middle is a square cabin with painted walls, house of the Gna (see the chapter on religion). In the center of the village, a cleared place around a doubalé serves for public meetings; the elders hold their councils under the branches of the doubalé.

764 [100] Finally, the cemetery of the free men is found outside the
554 village, to the west; that of captives and people of caste is to the south of the free men's cemetery.

326 Every village has its blacksmith, for he is life, and the vil-
600 lage could not subsist without him. Before the French conquest,

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traditions plastiques de l'Afrique noire
[Variety and Unity of the Plastic Art Traditions of Black Africa].

532 A great variety of wood (4) is available to the sculptor, who

4. Passim, H. Lavachery, "L'art noir d'Afrique et son destin" [Negro Art of Africa and its Destiny], Présence africaine.

chiefly uses fine-grained species whose fibers are not very sensitive, and who avoids woods that are too hard and too dense. The artist [412] works with green wood, generally with an adze, or chip-axe, which probably is derived from the hoe. This instrument serves for rough chipping the mass and for establishing the secondary volumes; it gives the statue a singular "faceted" aspect. The work is completed [412] by means of a knife and gouges. A skillful technique makes it possible to give the wood a patina; it is blackened by burying the pieces in certain types of mud, by being immersed in palm oil, and daubed with lampblack. The wood is reddened by applying plasters made by grinding barks and making pastes from them. The objects so treated are [105] lengthily polished with skins and take on the sombre, brilliant aspect of old bronzes. The patina of the pieces is an important element of their beauty.

The art observes stylistic conventions, such as the deformation of normal appearances. In the structure of the mass, convention regulates the proportion of the parts, of the solid portions and the hollows; it regulates the development of the secondary volumes and of the surfaces of the different planes, their extent and their lines of contact. In its volume, the statuary obeys an almost immutable canon: to a cylindrical trunk is attached a head that is enormous in proportion to the other members, which are confined to narrow limits; the lower members are much shorter than in nature. The oversized head is a convention related to ancestor worship. The head is sculpted in concave style, and the entire figure is subordinated to a marked geometrization.

● 326 The blacksmiths also work gold by using the "lost wax"
531 method, or by hammering, embossing anf fixing thin leaves of gold,

326 as well as of silver, on a wooden core. The thrones of the ancient [531] Bambara chiefs were covered in this manner. Today the golden ornaments are no longer reserved exclusively for the wives of kings. [301] Bracelets, pendants, and necklaces are produced in large quantities in a filigree work in which the Black excels.

B. Ceramics

323 The land is very rich in pottery, but Bambara men do not model clay, pottery being a woman's art. Inversely, the women do not work on statuary.

C. Painting

531 The Bambara paint murals on the sanctuary walls with ocher 386 and a millet paste. The priests make these drawings periodically. The walls of the young people's huts are also decorated with symbolic motifs: calabash spoons, festoons, ladders with 22 bars, drawings of hands, lines of chevrons. The young girls come to paint these, [337] with clay from the river or with a mixture of clay and cow dung. All these geometric drawings are signs representing not only the cosmogony, but a subtle translation of all the movements of the executing artist's soul. They are a veritable form of writing.

D. Music

533 771 Music is a privileged art (1) because it is bound to instru-

1. Griaule, Passim, "Symbole des arts africains" [Symbol of the African Arts], Présence africaine.

ments, that is to say, to materials, to the human body by the voice and the dance, to numbers by the rhythm, to medicine, to divination, and to religion.

534 771 [106] In a report to the French Institute of Anthropology on February 18, 1948, Mme. G. Dieterlen described the structure and symbolism of the two Bambara musical instruments, the Sema guitar and the royal drum.

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1. Kéné, "public place," "court"; salo, "to stroke gently with the hand," "to make gestures."

One after the other the stars of the firmament go out, and only the morning star (sigi dolo) still shines, seeming to defy the dawn. Many "kouyô kouyô," shouted from a hundred throats, rise from the village, and the square is emptied. Everybody (I mean the women, for the squatting men keep on drinking and stirring the fire) rushes out of the village and forms a circle around the sacred karité tree. With his back against the tree, separated from the crowd by a white cloth, a blacksmith is kneeling rather than sitting and, razor in hand, awaiting the victims. He is calm, sure of himself, and not afraid; after all, it is quickly done. He grasps the foreskin, recites his formula as he spits, and the iron is raised, throws a gleam, and falls. A gunshot announces to the drinkers on the square that there is one more Bambara in the village, and while a woman storyteller /griotte/ applauds him, the owner of the god burns a few nayanka (2) leaves

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2. A tree whose name in French I do not know.

between two brands, and feverishly and eagerly goes to place the ashes on the kara, the altar dedicated to the shades of the ancestors (3), in the court of the one who was circumcised or excised.

3. This is the procedure wherever the Komo fetish is found. In the circle of Ségou a Komo is almost always the one appealed to, and if none is owned in the village, it is brought from a neighboring village for the occasion.

881 Limping, the circumcised go under the sacred trees where the dances in honor of the fetish are held, and that is where they stay

764 There is seldom a djansa for unmarried persons, and the corpse lying in the grave does not even get branches to protect it from the earth with which it is covered. Not having had children, the young man receives his live hen and the girl her egg.

Burials of Women Who Were Pregnant or Died in Childbirth

766 The death of a woman during pregnancy or while giving birth to her child stirs the whole female population. To appease the spirits, 845 drive away the gnâma, and protect the village from another misfortune of this kind, all the excised women go to cut branches of karité (Bassia parkii) or dogora. As soon as the deceased is carried to the grave, they burst out of the village, crying and weeping. Three times they go back toward the village, waving their branches, and call out "hou" three times in shouts that disturb and chill you.

[326] At the edge of the grave, or most often in the grave itself, a blacksmith -- the surgeon of the occasion -- removes the child, tells its sex, and lays it near the mother (2). During the operation the

2. If the deceased has already been delivered, the stillborn child is wrapped in the mother's mat. The operation is performed for one who has not been delivered, less to save the child's life than to spare the deceased the disgrace of the egg. A newborn child deprived of its mother is condemned to death. It is not strangled, of course, but no woman wants to give it her breast, and the little thing dies of hunger. If a woman were to nurse it out of compassion, the spirits and gnâma would take revenge by

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